

[Jane Clayton]

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The Grant Family (white)

North Miami

Miami, Florida

Dairyman

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Writer

JANE CLAYTON

About fifteen miles north of Miami and six miles west of Hollywood in located the small, well-kept dairy farm of the Clayton family.

They live in a large, rambling stucco house consisting of an immense living room, three bedrooms, kitchen and bath. The house was built after the 1928 hurricane and is very strongly constructed, all the essential connections being bolted together and the whole structure embedded in solid cement.

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The house is entirely surrounded by bushes, shrubs and vines of every hue and description, for Jane Clayton, the wife, is a great lover of flowers and, as they have lived here for eight years, she has had time to accumulate a wide variety.

Upon entering the living room, I was reminded of a club room in a hunting lodge. It is an extraordinary room not only because of its immense size but because of the unusual furnishings. Everywhere I looked, I saw some sort of wild bird or animal perched on the wall. There are several alligator and snake hides of various lengths, stuffed squirrels, an owl, chicken hawk, eagle, skunk and wild cat, all arranged in a very life-like manner. I learned that all of the specimens had been caught in the nearby Everglades and that they were mounted by one of her sons, Richard, who had studied taxidermy as a hobby.

Jane said that Richard used to go out in an old model T Ford roadster and when he would return he would have the rumble seat filled with live alligators, and various animals that he had captured in the Everglades.

The remainder of the living room is furnished in simple but comfortable style. There are several large rugs on the floor, a grand piano, radio, three piece overstuffed living room suite consisting of two chairs and a sofa, several odd chairs and an immense dining table. Two sides of this room are made up of a series of French doors which open on the front and back porches respectively. As these doors face east and west there is always a maximum of light and breeze, making this one of the most delightful rooms I have ever seen. The remaining two sides open into the three bedrooms and the kitchen, two doors being on each side of the room.

The bedrooms are large and well furnished with the usual standard bedroom furniture and bright chintz draperies. All the walls throughout the house are painted white and the floors are of highly polished oak.

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The kitchen floor is covered with linoleum and this cheerful room contains a large modern four burner gas stove with oven and an up to date electric refrigerator. There is running 3 hot and cold water throughout and it is quite unusual to find such conveniences so distant from any settled community. Jane explained that they used bottled gas and generated their own electricity, having two gasoline plants, one for the house and adjoining tool shed and one for the dairy and pasteurizing house.

The dairy is located about 700 feet from the house and consists of a large milking shed and adjoining bottling and pasteurizing rooms. Nearby are the pump house and electric plant. All of the buildings are made of cement and are painted white inside and outside. The floors are also made of cement and are painted grey.

The Claytons own about 50 head of fine registered cattle, some Jersey and some Guernsey. They have four fine calves at present but had very bad luck with them last year. It seems that John Clayton was forced to drive the milk truck on his route during the past winter season as the boys were in school most of the time and he was short-handed.

While he was away, their big police dog "Fritz" suddenly began chasing the calves and before he was through he had killed them all. Upon asking Jane why they didn't get rid of the dog she said, "Fritz is a very valuable dog and a good watch dog and we sure need one around here. He is a great-grandson of "Rin Tin Tin," the movie dog and we paid \$200 for him when he was a little puppy. Now he is about seven years old but he sure is a great protection for he sleeps most all day and prowls around all night, hunting wild cats or anything that might be about."

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I don't believe that I have ever seen a larger police dog. He weighs about 150 pounds and is all solid muscle. He is a rather friendly dog, but very vicious when crossed, and will allow no one to touch any member of the family. The Claytons also have another dog, part

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bulldog and part police. He romps and plays with the children all day and, as he is only six months old, he naturally chases after every animal on the place, much to their discomfort.

As Jane first showed me around the farm and buildings I will try to describe their farm before going into their family history.

Their farm consists of ten acres with an option of 100 acres of pasture land for grazing. They have a few citrus trees, guava bushes, papaya plants and banana trees. At the banana trees Jane stopped and pointed to a large group of cannas which were planted along the side of the milk house.

“Do you see those?” she asked. “Well, one time when we had all gone to town and Dad was home alone, he saw a bunch of these cannas growing way up the road. He dug them up and transplanted them where they are now and didn't say word to anyone about it. A few weeks later as they began to take root and grow, he smiled all over and told us one day, ‘Do you know,’ he said, ‘I've got a big surprise for you, in a little while I'm going to have some mighty fine bananas on this farm.’ He took me over to where they were and proudly showed them to me. ‘Why those are cannas,’ I said. ‘No, they're not,’ he said, ‘you just wait and see they're fine 5 bananas.’ He kept right on thinking they were banana trees until the flowers bloomed. After that he never mentioned them again, but the family and I kid him to this day about them and always refer to them as ‘Dad's banana trees.’ You see, we came from up north but we have been in Florida for over twenty years. Until we came to this farm we were always in the northern part of the state and had never seen some of the bushes and trees that grow down here.”

Besides the dogs and cows, the Claytons have a pedigreed bull, 12 cats, about 350 chickens, 30 ducks, two rabbits, 21 beehives and a half grown goat. This goat is the special pet of Elizabeth, the youngest daughter and it follows her wherever she goes. He jumps over everything in his way and runs in and out of the house just like the dogs and

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even jumps up in her lap when she sits down. John bought the goat for her when he was just a few days old and Elizabeth and her mother fed him with a bottle.

After walking over the farm and looking at all the live stock, we went back to the house and sat down to talk. Jane Clayton is a very pleasant woman, small in stature, attractive and a little beyond middle aged. She has brown eyes and a dark complexion which is set off beautifully by a mass of wavy grey hair. She is a devout Catholic and she goes with the children to church every Sunday. Although she is kept very busy with the work on the farm, she is never too busy to lend a helping hand to some neighbor less fortunate than herself.

“John and I like it very much here and all the children seem to enjoy it. We have eleven children, all living and in good health.

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There are four girls and seven boys. Five of the children are at home with us and the rest are scattered in the northern states. One of my oldest daughters is married and has two children of her own, that is Beatrice. The other, Margaret, is a trained nurse in one of the big hospitals in New York. They come to visit us whenever they have the chance but I never seem to get time off to visit them. They both appear to be well contented with their lot and are doing very well financially.

“The other two girls are here at home and I guess I'll lose one of them very shortly for Frances, the oldest, is 21 and engaged to an engineer who lives in Fort Lauderdale. Elizabeth, the youngest of all the children is ten years old and she and the three boys all go to the Catholic school in Hollywood. Robert, the oldest boy at home, is 17 and he drives the school bus. He gets \$5.00 a week to drive it and besides it makes it very handy for the rest of the children because he parks the bus in front of the house after school and they all leave together in the morning. Frances drove the county school bus last year but this year she wanted to stay home and help me. After school, the boys have to help their Dad at the dairy.

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"The four oldest boys are all up north and three of them work together in one of the large airplane factories on Long Island. My oldest son, James, is an aviator out on the west coast. My boys at home are all interested in aviation. They are always building some kind of a model airplane and have the parts strewn all over the house. If they ever decide to make aviation their life work we'll pretty near have enough to start our own airline. I think it's as safe today as any business and I don't worry about them.

"We get along very well here on the farm and Dad would never be contented to live in the city. We have nearly everything we need and are as happy as the average family. Maybe one of the reasons we get along so well with each other is the fact that we all share some in the business of running the farm. Frances and I own and take care of all the chickens. Whatever we buy or sell and the cost of the feed we divide equally and share the profits and losses together.

"Robert owns the 21 hives of bees. He extracts all the honey, boils it down and then bottles and labels it himself. He gets \$10 worth of honey out of one hive alone. He has quite a few steady customers and sells the honey from the milk truck.

"John, Jr. who is 16, saved up his money and bought a couple of calves from his Dad and he has great expectations of raising a herd of his own with these and sharing in the business by the time he gets a bit older.

"Nelson, my youngest boy, who is now 12 years old, is the proud owner of the ducks and hopes some day to make a lot of money with them. He never gets tired of watching them and they really are a sight. Every so often they will get a notion to take off and away they go, flying all around the house, dairy and the surrounding country. At night they usually roost on top of the house.

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They are hard to catch and he and Elizabeth have a great time chasing after them.

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"Last but not least of my children is little Elizabeth who is also a share holder in this business. The goat and the rabbits belong to her. She hopes to have a small herd of goats and sell the milk along with the cows milk. There is good money in goat milk. It brings anywhere from 40 to 69 cents a quart and there is a good demand for it during the season. Some people must drink it all the time as it is good for certain ailments. I sometimes wish we had goats instead of cows for they are much cheaper to keep as they will eat any kind of grass and only require about a pint of feed a day.

"We have been in the dairy business about ten years now. Before that Dad used to farm, but he doesn't trust farming any more, says that it is too uncertain. Some years ago he had a good big crop of potatoes and, an the price was right, he made 6,000 dollars that year. But he lost all of it in the next two years and hasn't had any faith in farming since.

"We like the dairy business pretty well but Dad and the boys get awful tired of it sometimes. Then we all get mighty discouraged when the neighbors next to us start fussing up. I think that they are just jealous of us because we have been able to accumulate a few things and they have practically nothing. It's not that they couldn't have anything but they just don't try and then think that the world owes them a living. With all this open country for 9 miles around, I don't know why they had to build right next door to us. They sure are mean and no account. Why, I couldn't begin to count all the chickens they have stolen from me and lately we have been forced to fence them in right back of the house so I can keep a close watch on them.

"We haven't been able to prove anything on them but I know that the chickens would not disappear by themselves and they are our only neighbors. There was a time when we could all go to town at once and take "Fritz" with us but lately, things have gotten so bad that we have been unable to do that. One of us must always be at home and now either Dad or one of the boys has to sleep at the dairy with a loaded shotgun always at hand. Why, it was only two weeks ago that one of them cut the fence and let all of our cattle loose. We sure had one awful time getting them back in again. They even cut one of our

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cow's tail off and if Dad hadn't of found it out right away the poor thing would have bled to death. We have tried to get the sheriff after them and we even brought the matter to court but we can't get enough evidence against them. We have finally decided to take matters into our own hands and if we ever catch one of them on our property we intend to shoot. We don't want trouble with anyone but we can't afford to keep losing our chickens and having our cattle molested.”

I then asked Jane some questions regarding the running of the farm, to which she replied:

“In the summer time when the boys don't have to go to school 10 they help their Dad with the milking and other chores but in the winter time he has to hire a man to help him with milking and delivering the milk in Hollywood, Fort lauderdale and the rest of the countryside. They milk twice a day, at one o'clock in the afternoon and again at one in the morning. After the cows have been milked, the milk is then put into a pasteurizer and heated in order to kill any germs. Then it is cooled through pipes, bottled and sealed. They also make chocolate milk and buttermilk for their customers and butter and ice cream for our own use. Up until this year, Dad had only one small Chevrolet truck to do all the delivering but his business has picked up now so that he was forced to buy another truck. We don't own a car for our own personal use. Whenever we go anywhere, we use one of the trucks.

“The hot water for the pasteurizer is heated by a large wood-burning furnace which is located outside the building. In order to get enough wood to run this furnace, John has to take his tractor out in the surrounding country and cut down a large tree, which he hauls back and saws and chops until it is the right length to fit the furnace. Each time he has to venture further away as all the suitable timber nearby has been used.

“After the milk has been bottled, the truck has to be loaded, empty bottles washed, floors scrubbed and everything put in order for the next milking. Dairy life is not easy but it furnishes us a fair living and as times are now, we feel that we are pretty lucky.

"We are kept busy most all the time but Dad and I manage to get off a few hours once or twice a week. Dad likes to go to the movies and sometimes he and the boys go over to the beach and have a swim. When the boys grow up they will probably want to make their own way in the world and by that time Dad hopes to retire to some little farm where he can take it easy. Right now with times as hard as they are I feel that we have to keep on as we are now.

"Dad has one particular hobby and whenever he has a spare moment he is always in the pump house working on it. It is some sort of perpetual notion machine that consists of a long series of rods and gadgets rigged up in series. Every once in a while he adds something more to it and swears that it will work some day. He has been working on it for years now and the boys sure do kid them about it.

"We are never much to go visiting but on Sunday the children always have a few of their friends to dinner. We never have any time to read books or magazines but always read the newspapers and listen to the radio. In that way we try to keep abreast of the times.

"Both Dad and I had a high school education but we were both born and raised on a farm. I suppose it's only natural that we like farming best and we would never be happy working for someone else or living in the city. Dad often says 'there may not be much money in this business but at least we're our own boss and 12 as long as people eat and drink milk I guess we'll always be able to make a fair living,' and I agreed with him."